THE PORT OF MISSING MEN

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON. Author of "The House of a Thousand Candles"

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THE COMEDY OF A SHEEPFOLD.



SCAR'S eye, roaming the landscape as he left Shir ley Claiborne and start ed for the bungalow swept the upland Clal borne acres and rested upon a moving shadow. He drew rein

under a clump of wild cherry trees at the roadside and waited. Several hundred yards away lay the Clathorne sheepfold, with a broad pasture risin, beyond. A shadow is not a thing to be ignored by a man trained in the niceties of scouting. Oscar, satisfying himself that substance by behind the shadow, dismounted and tied his horse, Then he bent low over the stone wall. and watched

stealer of sheep, as I might have

Zmal was only a dim figure against the dark meadow, which he was slowly



"It is the big fellow-

on toward Os- a hand still car and the clutching his road. "It is mischlef that brings him from bled and half the hills-yes?" Oscar reflected, glanc- ran toward the ing up and down the highway. Faint- sheds, with Osly, very softly through the night, he car at his heels. heard the orchestra at the hotel playing for the dance. The little soldier ed to the negro unbuttoned his coat, drew the revolv er from his belt and thrust it into his

mockingly courteous tones; "Good evening, my friend; it's a fine evening for a walk."

Zmai drew back and growled. "Let me pass," he said in his difficult German.

"It is a long wall; there should be no difficulty in passing. This country is much freer than Servin-yes?" and Oscar's tone was pleasantly conversa-

Zmai put his hand on the wall and

"A moment only, comrade. You seem

"I have no time for you," snarled the Servian. "Begone!" And he shook himself impatiently and again put his hand on the wall.

"One should not be in too muc haste, comrade," and Oscar thrust Zmai back with his finger tips.

The man yielded and ran a few steps out of the clump of trees and sought to escape there. It was clear to Oscar that Zmai was not anxious to penewhose garden extended quite near. He met Zmal promptly and again thrust him back.

"It is a message-yes?" asked Oscar. "It is my affair," blurted the big fellow. "I mean no harm to you." "It was you that tried the knife on

my body. It is much quieter than shooting. You have the knife-yes?" The little soldier whipped out his re-"In which pocket is the business car

ried? A letter undoubtedly. They do not trust swine to carry words. Ah!" Oscar dropped below the wall as Zmai struck at him. When he looked up a moment later the Servian was running back over the meadow toward the sheepfold. Oscar, angry at the ease with which the Servian had evaded him, leaped the wall and set off after the big fellow. He was quite sure that the man bore a written message and equally sure that it must be of im portance to his employer. He clutched his revolver tight, brought up his elbows for greater ease in running and sped after Zmal, now a blur on the starlighted sheep pasture.

The slope was gradual and a pretty feature of the landscape by day, but it



afforded a tollsome path for runners Zmal already realized that he had

blundered in not forcing the wall. He was running uphill, with a group of sheds, another wall and a still steeper and rougher field beyond. His bulk told against him, and behind him be heard the quick thump of Oscar's feet on the turf. The starlight grew dimmer through tracts of white scud; the surface of the pasture was rougher to the feet than it appeared to the eye. A hound in the Claiborne stable yard bayed suddenly, and the sound echoed from the surrounding houses and drifted off toward the sheepfold. Then a

noble music rose from the kennels. Captain Claiborne, waiting for his sister on the veranda, looked toward' the stables, listening. Zmal approached the sheep sheds

reach the pasture wall. His rage at person whom it could not interest in thus being driven by a small man for any way whatever. whom he had great contempt did not help his wind or stimulate the flight of scrutiny as they faced each other in his heavy legs, and he saw now that the library, he would lessen the narrowing margin "It is the big fellow-yes? He is a between himself and his pursuer if he horse back to our stable an hour ago." swerved to the right to clear the sheds. He suddenly slackened his pace and with a vicious tug settled his wool hat more firmly upon his small skull. He charge at home." crossing from went now at a dogtrot, and Oscar the side far was closing upon him rapidly; then, thest from the quite near the sheds, Zmai wheeled Claiborne about and charged his pursuer headhouse. He stop long. At the moment he turned Oscar's carefully. ped several revolver bit keenly into the night. Captimes as though tain Claiborne, looking toward the manded, and Oscar extended his uncertain of his slope, saw the flash before the hounds palms. whereabouts at the stables answered the report.

> clambered over curiously small voice and clapped his those of a miner, and a discharged sol a stone wall hands to his head, "Stop; I want the letter!" shouted

side of the Oscar in German. The man turned worse for you if you try to bolt." sheepfold, pass | slowly, as though ed it and strode dazed, and, with

head, half stum-Claiborne callstablemen to quiet the dogs. cont pocket. Zmal was drawing near | snatched a laner, advancing rapidly now that he had tern and ran gained his bearings. At the wall Os away through car rose suddenly and greeted him in the pergola to garden and thence into the pasture beyond. Clathorne snatched a

lantern and ran. Meanwhile Os-

ear, thinking Zmai badly burt, did no fire again, but flung bluself upon the fellow's broad shoulders, and down they crashed against the door of the nearest pen. Zmai swerved and shook nimself free, while he fiercely curses his foe. Oscar's hands slipped on the fellow's hot blood that ran from a long crease in the side of his bead.

As they fell the pen door snappe thronged the frightened sheep.

"The letter-give me the letter!" com manded Oscar, his face close to the Servian's. He did not know how bad! the man was injured, but he was anx lous to complete his business and be off. Still the sheep came huddling through the broken door, across the prostrate men and scampered away into the open. Captain Claiborne, run ning toward the fold with his lantern and not looking for obstacles, stumbles over their bewildered advance guard trate closer to the Claiborne house, and plunged headlong into the gray deeces. Meanwhile into the pockets of his prostrate foe went Oscar's hands with no result. Then be remembered the man's gesture in pulling the hat

> close upon his ears, and off came the hat and with it a blood stained envelope. The last sheep in the pen trooped out and galloped toward its comrades. Oscar, making off with the letter, plunged into the rear guard of the sheep, fell, stumbled to his feet and confronted Captain Claiborne as that gentleman in solled evening dress fumbled for his lantern and swore at the sheep in language unbecoming an officer and a gentleman.

"It is sheep-yes?" and Oscar started to bolt.

"Halt!"

The authority of the tone rang familiarly in Oscar's ears. He had after considerable tribulation learned to stop short when an officer spoke to him and the gentleman of the sheepfold stood straight in the starlight and spoke like an officer.

"What are you doing here, and who fired that shot?" Oscar saluted and summoned his best

English. "It was an accident, sir." "Why are you running and why did

you fire? Understand you are a trespasser here, and I am going to turn you over to the constable." "There was a sheep stealer-yes?

He is yonder by the pens, and we had some little fighting, but he is not dead At that moment Claiborne's eyes caught sight of a burly figure rising

and thrashing about by the broken pen door. "That is the sheep stealer," said Os

car, "We shall catch him-yes?" Zmai peered toward them uncertain ly for a moment, then turned abruptly and ran toward the road. Oscar start ed to cut off his retreat, but Claiborne caught the sergeant by the shoulder and flung him back.

"One of you at a time! They can turn the hounds on the other rascal What's that you have there? Give it to me-quick!"

"It's a piece of wool"-But Claiborne snatched the pape from Oscar's hand and comman

the man to march ahead of him to the house. So over the meadow and time languor had crept into the beart through the pergola they went, across of April and all the windows were the veranda and into the library. The open. The blurred murmurs of insects power of army discipline was upon stole into the house. Oscar, half for-Oscar. If Claiborne had not been an gotten by his captor, heard a sound in officer he would have run for it in the the window behind him and a hand garden. As it was, he was taxing his touched him through the curtain. wits to find some way out of his predicament. He had not the slightest tiently. idea as to what the paper might be He had risked his life to secure it, and



"The letter-give me the letter!" com

rapidly, with still a hundred yards to now the crumpled, blood stained paper traverse beyond them before he should had been taken away from him by a He blinked under Claiborne's sharp

"Yes, sir."

"You have been a soldler." "In the cavalry, sir. I have my dis-

"Where do you live?" "I work as teamster in the coal mines -yes? They are by Lamar, sir." Claiborne studied Oscar's erect figure

"Let me see your hands," he com

"You are lying; you do not work in At the shot Zmal cried aloud in his the coal mines. Your clothes are not dler doesn't go to digging coal. Stanwhere you are, and it will be the

> Claiberne turned to the table with the envelope. It was not scaled, and he took out the plain sheet of note paper on which was written: CABLEGRAM, Winkelried, Vienna,

Winkelried, Vienna. Not later than Friday. CHAUVENET. Claiborne read and reread these eigh words; then he spoke bluntly to Oscar

"Where did you get this?" "From the hat of the sheep steale

Who is he and where did he get it?" "I don't know, sir. He was of Servia, and they are an ugly race-yes?" "What were you going to do with the

paper?" Oscar grinned. "if I could read it-yes?-I might know, but if Austria is in the paper,

then it is mischlef, and maybe it would e murder. Who knows?" Claiborne looked frowningly from the paper to Oscar's tranquil eyes.

"Dick!" called Shirley from the hall, and she appeared in the doorway drawing on her gloves, but paused at seeing Oscar.

"Shirley, I caught this man in the sheepfold. Did you ever see him be- day after tomorrow."

"To be sure it is! I hadn't recog nized him. Thank you very much. And she smiled at Oscar.

Dick frowned flercely and referred again to the paper.

"Where Is M. Chauvenet-have you "If he isn't at the hotel or in Washington, I'm sure I don't know. If we

are going to the dance"-"Plague the dance! I heard a shot in the sheep pasture a blt ago and ran out to find this fellow in a row with

another man, who got away." "I heard the shot and the dogs from my window. You seem to have been in a fuss, too, from the looks of your And Shirle sat down and smoothed her gloves with provoking

Dick sent Oscar to the far end of the library with a gesture and held up the message for Shirley to read.

"Don't touch it!" he exclaimed, and when she nodded her head in sign that she had read it be said, speaking earnestly and rapidly:

"I suppose I have no right to hold this message; I must send the man to the hotel telegraph office with it. But read it to me." where is Chauvenet? What is his business in the valley? And what is the link between Vienna and these hills?" "Don't you know what you are doing here?" she asked, and he flushed,

"I know what, but not why!" he blurted irritably. "But that's enough!" "You know that Baron von Marhof wants to find Mr. John Armitage, but you don't know



years." Shirley nodded and clasped her fingers together. Her elbows resting on the high arms of her chair caused her cloak to flow sweepingly Shirley nodded and away from her clasped her fingers shoulders.

"I have my or

ders and I'm go

ing to find hin

if it takes ten

the end of the room, with his back to the portieres stood Oscar, immovable. Claiborne reexamined the message and extended it again to Shirley.

"There's no doubt of that being Chau venet's writing, is there?"

"I think not, Dick. I have had notes from him now and then in that hand. He has taken pains to write this with unusual distinctness."

The color brightened in her cheeks suddenly as she looked toward Oscar. The curtains behind him swayed, but

so did the curtain back of her. A May

THE PRISONER AT THE BUNGALOW. N Vienna, Friday!" "There should be Claiborne erumpled the paper impagreat deeds, my dear "Shirley, you are against me! I be rand adjusted the wick lieve you have seen Armitage here, of a smoking brass and I want you to tell me what you know of him. It is not like you to shield a scamp of an adventurer, an postoffice at Lamar.

he hasn't the papers on his clothes then

you have this pleasant scheme for

kidnaping him, getting him down to

hills has overstimulated it."

her in these transactions?"

finished in that matter."

intrepld soul,"

tage's house."

his credit."

he had said.

en a fair grasp of the situation."

"Neither, it would seem, has Mr.

John Armitage. But I am quite well

days we shall know much more than

we do now. I should be happler if you

were in charge in Vienna. A false

step there-ugh! I besitate to think of

duty. You must not forget that the

acute Stroebel now sleeps the long

sleep and that many masses have al

"The splendor of our undertaking is

enough to draw his ghost from the grave. Ugh! By this time Zma

should have filed our cablegram at the

Springs and got your mail at the hotel

confidence in the operator there. Com-

"Trust him to pass it. His encoun

rand's eyes danced with excitement.

ly. Chauvenet had gone to Washing-

news of the progress of the conspiracy

in Vienna and, not least, to berate him

for crossing the Atlantic. "I do not

require watching, my dear Durand,"

"A man in love, dearest Jules, some-

While they waited in the bare upper

must now trudge back afoot to report

of his errands and nearly lost his life

volver had cut a neat furrow in his

"Lost! Lost! They are lost!"

cursed the two occupants in his own

dialect with a flerce, vile tongue. It

Chauvenet opened the door at his ap-

"The letters!" snapped Chauvenet.

When they had jerked the truth from

smeared face.

stiff as it ceased bleeding.

But they had gon

the wretched mess there would be."

will involve you in his affairs without "Which is not so simple, after all, as the slightest compunction if he can. one studies the situation. Mr. Armitage It's most infamous, outrageous, and is here, quite within reach. We suswhen I find him I'm going to thrash him within an inch of his life before pect him of being a person of distinct tion. He evinced unusual interest in a I turn him over to Marhof!"

day, we have our work to do."

Shirley laughed for the first time in your hands". their interview and rose and placed her "Our own hands, if you would be achands on her brother's shoulders. "Do it, Dick! He's undoubtedly a "You are captious. But, granted so, wicked, a terribly wicked and dangerwe must get them back. The gentle-

ous character." man is dwelling in a bungalow on the "I tell you I'll find him," he said mountain side for greater convenience tensely, putting up his hands to hers in watching events and woolng the where they rested on his shoulders. lady of his heart's desire. We employ-She laughed and kissed him, and when ed a clumsy clown to put him out of her hands fell to her side the message the world, but he dies hard, and now was in her gloved fingers. we have got to get rld of him. But if

unknown, questionable character. He

has followed you to this valley and

"I'll help you, Dick." she said, butoning her glove. "That's like you, Shirley."

"If you want to find Mr. Armitage" "Of course I want to find him!" His olce rose to a roar.

-"then turn around; Mr. Armitage is just behind you!" "Yes; I needed my man for other

ousiness," said Armitage, folding his

"Then turn around; Mr. Armitage is just behind you?

arms, "and as you were very much occupled I made free with the rear verands and changed places with him." Claiberne walked slowly toward him, the anger glowing in his face.

"You are worse than I thoughteavesdropper, housebreaker!" "Yes; I am both those things, Captain Claiborne. But I am also in a great hurry. What do you want with

"You are a rogue, an Impostor"-"We will grant that," said Armitage.

"That will be forthcoming fast enough. I want you to understand that I have a personal grievance against you."

"It must wait until day after tomor row, Captain Claiborne. I will come to you here or wherever you say on the

Armitage spoke with a deliberate on that was not the ton ogue or a fugitive. As he spoke into the Virginia hills amicably and he advanced until he faced Claiborne were quartered with the postmaster. in the center of the room. Shirley still They waited now for Zmal, whom stood by the window, holding the solled they had sent to the Springs with a paper in her hand. She had witnessed the change of the men at the end of message and to get Chauvenet's mail. Armitage, they had learned, used the the room. It had touched her humor. Lamar telegraph office, and they had It had been a joke on her brother, but she felt that the night had brought a decided to carry their business elsecrists. She could not continue to shield a man of whom she knew nothing save room of the inn for Zmai the big Serthat he was the object of a curious vian tramped up the mountain side enmity. The coup de theatre by which with an aching head and a heart heavy Armitage had taken the place of his with dread. The horse he had left tied servant had amused her for a moment in a thicket when he plunged down but she was vexed and angry now that through the Claiborne place had brohe had dared come again to the house ken free and run away, so that he

"You are under arrest, Mr. Armitage. I must detain you here," sald Claiborne to his masters. He had made a mess "In America-in free Virginia-without legal process?" asked Armitage, besides. The bullet from Oscar's re-

hughing. "You are a housebreaker, that is enough. Shirley, please go!"

scalp, which was growing sore and "You were not detached from the undoubtedly be dealt with harshly by army to find a housebreaker. But I Chauvenet and Durand, but he knew will make your work easy for you- that the sooner he reported his calamiday after tomorrow I will present my- | ties the better, so he stumbled toward self to you wherever you say. But Lamar, pausing at times to clasp his hour at which Virginia mountain now-that cable message which my small head in his great hands. When man found in your sheep pasture is of he passed the wild tangle that hid importance. I must trouble you to Armitage's bungalow he paused and

"No!" shouted Claiborne. Armitage drew a step nearer. "You must take my word for it that matters of importance, of farreaching consequence, hang upon that message. I must know what it is."

"You certainly have magnificent cheek! I am going to take that paper to Baron von Marhof at once." "Do so-but I must know first! Baron von Marhof and I are on the same side in this business, but he doesn't

understand it, and it is clear you don't. I Give me the message." He spoke commandingly, his voice thrilling with earnestness, and jerked out his last words with angry impa tience. At the same moment he and Claiborne stepped toward each other,

"I don't like your tone, Mr. Armitage!" "I don't like to use that tone, Captain

with their bands clinched at their

Claiborne." Shirley walked quickly to the table and put down the message. Then, going to the door, she paused as though by an afterthought and repeated quite slowly the words:

"Winkelried-Vienna-not later than Friday-Chauvenet." "Shirley!" roared Claiborne. John Armitage bowed to the already

vacant doorway, then bounded into tha

hall out upon the verands and ran Durand. through the garden to the side gate, "Lost! Lost! They are lost! I lost where Oscar waited. my way, and he nearly killed me-the Half an hour later Captain Claiborne little soldier-as I crossed a strange after an interview with Baron Marhof, turned his horse toward the

Chapter XXII

innkeeper. "Horses! Saddle our two horses quick and get another if you have to steal it," he screamed. Then he turned into the room to curse Zmal, while Durand with a towel and water sought to ease the ache in the big fellow's head and the sack. Jules." And M. Du- cleanse his face. "So that beggarly little servant did it, did he? He stole that paper I had

lamp that hung suspended from the given you, did he? What do you imceiling of a room of the inn, store and agine I brought you to this country for if you are to let two stupid fools play with you as though you were a "Meanwhile, this being but Wednes

Zmal, Chauvenet flung open the door

and bawled through the house for the

The Servian, on his knees before Durend, suffered the torrent of abuse

meekly. He was a scoundrel, hired to do murder, and his vilification by an angered employer did not greatly trouble him, particularly since he under certain document that was once in stood little of Chauvenet's rapid Ger-In half an hour Chauvenet was

again in a fury, learning at Lamar that the operator had gone down the road twenty miles to a dance and prisoner. would not be back until morning.

The imperturbable Durand shivered in the night air and prodded Chauvenet with ironles.

"We have no time to lose. That message must go tonight. You may be sure M. Armitage will not send it for us. Come, we've got to go down to Storm Springs."

They rode away in the starlight, leavyour steamer at Baltimore and cruising the postmaster alarmed and won ing with him until he is ready to come to terms. The American air has done dering. Chauvenet and Durand were much for your imagination, my dear well mounted on horses that Chauvene had sent into the hills in advance of his Jules, or possibly the altitude of the own coming. Zmai rode grim and si "You are not the fool you look, my dear Durand. You have actually takent on a clumsy plow horse, which was the best the publican could find for him. The knife was not the only weapon be had known in Servia. He "But the adorable young lady, the carried a potato sack across his saddle fair Mile. Claiborne-what becomes of bow. Chauvenet and Durand sent him the horse. ahead to set the pace with his inferior "That is none of your affair," replied mount. They talked together in low Chauvenet, frowning." "I am quite tones as they followed. content with my progress. I have not

"He is not so big a fool, this Armitage," remarked Durand. "He is quite deep, in fact. I wish it were he we are satisfied to leave it to you. In a few trying to establish on a throne and not that pitiful scapegrace in Vienna." "I gave him his chance down there

in the valley, and he laughed at me. It and quite certain that he is not a cow-"Trust Winkelried to do his full "Then he would not be a safe king

Our young friend in Vienna is a good

deal of a fool and altogether a cow-

ready been said for the repose of his ard. We shall have to provide him with a spine at his coronation." "If we fall"- began Chauvenet, "You suggest a fruitful but unplen ant topic. If we fall we shall be form nate if we reach the hospit ble shore of the Argentine for futn presidence Parls and Vienna would for know in I hope you have not misplaced your

again. If Winkelried succeeds in Vi ing back our giant must pass Armienna and we lose here, where do we arrive?" "We arrive quite where Mr. Armitage ers with Armitage have not been to chooses to land us. He is a gentleman of resources; he has money; he laughs The two men were dressed in rough cheerfully at misadventures; he has clothes, as for an outing, and in spite had you watched by the shrewdest "Where is your warrant for my ar- of the habitual triffing tone of their eyes in Europe, and you are considered talk they were a serious air. Du- a hard man to keep track of, my dea Durand. And not least important, he and he twisted his mustache nervoushas tonight snatched away that littl cablegram that was the signal to Win ton to meet Durand, to get from him kelried to go ahead. He is a very an noying and vexatious person, this Ar mitage. Even Zmai, whose knife made him a terror in Servia, seems unable to

cope with him." "And the fair daughter of the val-

"Pish! We are not discussing th young lady."

"I can understand how unpleasant the subject must be to you, my dear Jules. What do you imagine she know of M. Armitage? If he is the man we think he is, and a possible heir to a great throne, it would be impossible for her to marry him."

"His tastes are democratic. In Mon

tana he is quite popular." Durand flung away his cigarette and

laughed suddenly. "Has it occurred to you that this whole affair is decidedly amusing Here we are in one of the free Amerl can states about to turn a card that will dethrone a king if we are lucky And here is a man we are trying to ge out of the way-a man we might make king if he were not a fool! In Ameri ca! It touches my sense of humor, my

dear Jules!" An exclamation from Zmal arrested them. The Servian jerked up his horse and they were instantly at his side They had reached a point near the bunting preserve in the main highway It was about half past 1 o'clock, ar roads are usually free of travelers and they had been sending their horses along as briskly as the uneven roads and the pace of Zmai's laggard beast

The best of a horse's hoofs could be heard quite distinctly in the road ahead of them. The road tended downward, and the strain of the as cent was marked in the approaching animal's walk. In a moment the three men heard the horse's quick snort of satisfaction as it reached leveler ground. Then, scenting the other ani mals, it threw up its head and neighed

In the dusk of starlight Durand saw Zmai dismount and felt the Servian's big, rough hand touch his in passing the bridle of his horse.

"Wait!" said the Servian.

"Who goes there?"

The horse of the unknown paused neighed again and refused to go far ther. A man's deep voice encouraged him in low tones. The horses of Chauvenet's party danced about restlessly, responsive to the nervousness of the strange beast before them.

was near midnight when he reached the tavern and climbed the rickety The stranger's horse was quiet for an instant, and the rider had forced stairway to the room where the two him so near that the beast's upreine head and the erect shoulders of th horseman were quite clearly defined. proach, and they cried aloud as the

"Who goes there?" shouted the rider great figure appeared before them and while Chauvenet and Durand benthe lamp light fell upon his dark, blood their eyes toward him, their hands tight on their bridles, and listened "Is the message safe?" demanded waiting for Zmai. They heard a sud den rush of steps, the impact of his giant body as he flung himself upon the shrinking horse, and then a cry of alarm and rage. Chauvenet slipped down and ran forward with the quick soft glide of a cat and caught the

bridle of the stranger's horse. The horseman struggled in Zmai's great arms, and his beast plunged wildly. No words passed. The rider had kicked his feet out of the stirrups and gripped the borse hard with his legs. His arms were flung up to protect his head, over which Zmai tried to force

"The knife?" bawied the Servian. "No!" answered Chauvenet.

"The devil!" yelled the rider, and dug his spurs into the rearing beast's tlanks,

Chauvenet held on valiantly with both hands to the horse's head. Once the frightened beast swung him clear of the ground. A few yards distant Durand sat on his own horse and held the bridles of the others. He soothed the restless animals in low tones, the light of his cigarette shaking oddly in the dark with the movement of his

The horse censed to plunge, Zma? held its rider erect with his left arms while the right drew the sack down over the head and shoulders of the

"Tie him," said Chauvenet, and Zmai buckled a strap about the man's arms and bound them tight.

The dust in the bag caused the man inside to cough, but save for the one exclamation he had not spoken. Chauvenet and Durand conferred in low tones while Zmai drew out a tether strap and snapped it to the curb bit of the captive's horse.

"The fellow takes it pretty coolly," remarked Deand, lighting a fresh eigarette. "What are you going to do with him?"

"We will take him to his own place-It is near-and coax the papers out of him. Then we'll find a precipice and toss him over. It is a simple matter," Zmal handed Chauvenet the revolver he had taken from the slient man on

"I am ready," he reported. "Go abend; we follow." And they started toward the bungalow, Zmai riding beside the captive and holding

fast to the led horse. Where the road was smooth they sent the horses forward at a smart trot. But the captive accepted the galt. He found the stirrups again and sat his saddle is quite possible that he is not a fool straight. He coughed now and then, but the hemp sack was sufficiently porous to give him a little air. As they rode off his silent submission caused Durand to ask:

"Are you sure of the man, my dear Jules?

"Undoubtedly. I didn't get a square look at him, but he's a gentleman by the quality of his clothes. He is the same build. It is not a plow horse,



They started, Zmai riding beside the

captive. but a thoroughbred he's riding. The gentlemen of the valley are in their beds long ago,"

"Would that we were in ours! The spring nights are cold in these hills!" "The work is nearly done. The little soldier is yet to reckon with. But we are three, and Zmai did quite well

with the potato sack." Chauvenet rode ahead and addressed a few words to Zmai. "The little man must be found before we finish. There must be no mis-

take about it." They exercised greater caution as they drew nearer the wood that concealed the bungalow, and Chauvenet dismounted, opened the gate and set a stone against it to insure a ready egress. Then they walked their horses up the driveway.

threw away his cigarette with a sigh. "You are convinced this is the wise course, dearest Jules?" "Be quiet and keep your eyes open.

There's the house." He halted the party, dismounted and crept forward to the bungalow. He circled the veranda, found the blinds open and peered into the long lounging room, where a few embers smoldered in the broad fireplace and an oil lamp shed a faint light. One man they held captive; the other was not in sight. Chauvenet's courage rose at the prospect of easy victory. He tried the door, found it unfastened and, with his revolver ready in his hand, threw it open. Then he walked slowly toward the table, turned the wick of the lamp high and surveyed the room carefully. doors of the rooms that opened from the apartment stood ajar. He followed the wall cautiously, kicked them open. peered into the room where Armitage's things were scattered about and found his iron bed empty. Then he walked quickly to the veranda and summoned

the others. "Bring him in!" he said without taking his eyes from the room.

A moment later Zmai had lifted the silent rider to the veranda and flung him across the threshold. Durand, now aroused, fastened the horses to the veranda rail.

"Open the trunks in those rooms and be quick, I will join you in a moment." And as Durand turned into Armitage's room Chauvenet peered

"Take off the bag," he commanded Chauvenet studied the lines of the

Admonished by Chauvenet, Durand

Chauvenet caught up some candles from the mantel and lighted them.

again into the other chambers, called once or twice in a low tone, then turn-

erect, silent figure as Zmai loosened

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ed to Zmai and the prisoner.